

CHANDAMAMA

AUGUST 1981

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"THE GUIDE THROUGH
THE DESERT"

Jeevan and Hanu Find

THE GENIUS MINDS

Genius is an instinctive and extraordinarily imaginative, creative or inventive capacity. Children who show early signs of genius are called child prodigies.



Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was an extremely brilliant scientist. He studied physics, and by the age of 25, developed the Theory of Relativity. Here he devised a set of laws to explain gravity, electromagnetism and atomic energy.



A multi-faceted genius is very rare—**Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)** of Italy was one such person. He was an artist, sculptor, engineer and architect. He studied human anatomy, nature and aerology. This he recorded in notebooks with illustrations and sketches. As an artist, his most famous work is the *MONA LISA*, which is considered the most valuable painting in the world!

Srinivasa Ramanujam (1887-1920) was our own mathematical genius. At 16, he obtained a collection of 6,000 theorems which he solved himself! Although unaware of the existing mathematics of his time, Ramanujam developed several theorems on his own. In England, Ramanujam became the first Indian to be elected to the Royal Society of London. His mastery of the continued fraction was unequalled by any mathematician ever!



A child prodigy who left his mark in music was Austrian composer **W. A. Mozart (1756-1842)**. He started composing pieces of music by the age of 5. Soon afterwards, he perfected the playing of the violin and started giving public concerts. At 16, he gave up the violin in preference for the piano which he played very well by that age!



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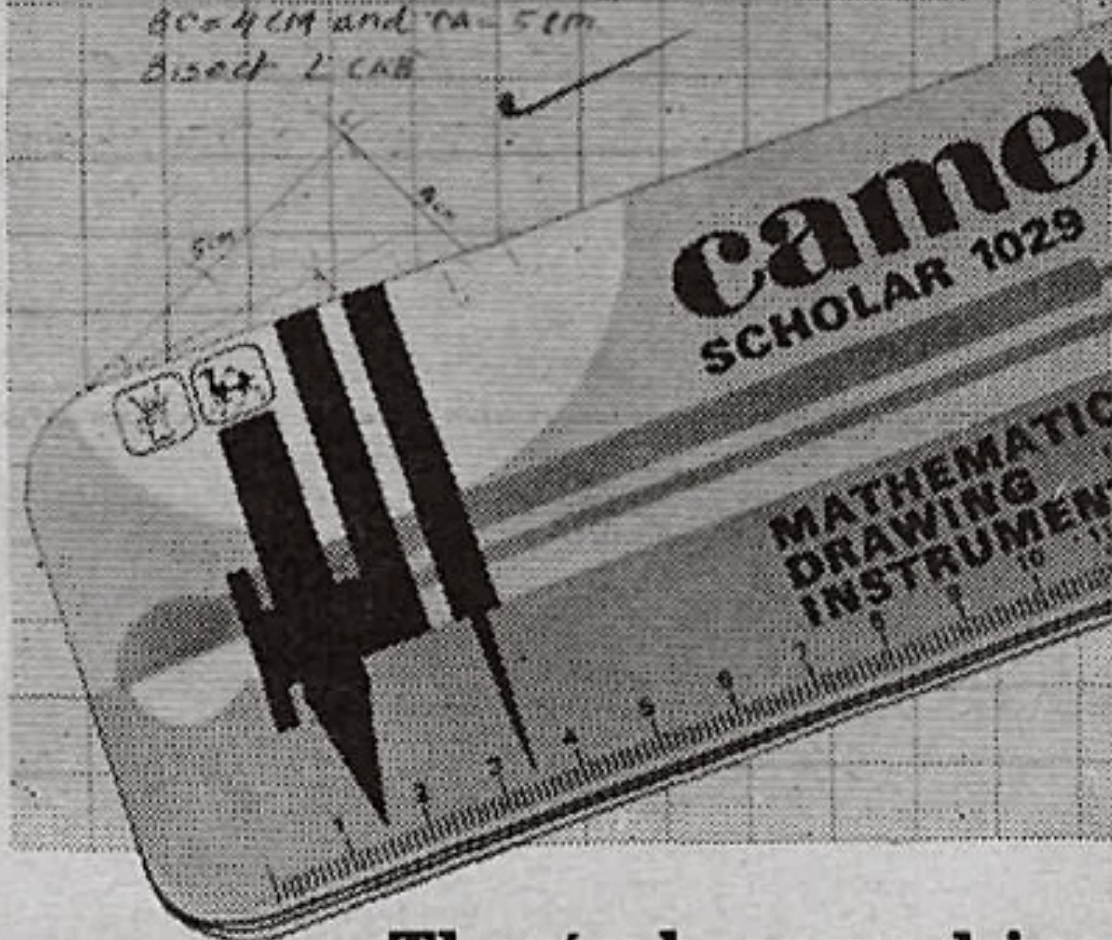


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PLUS SIX COMPLETE STORIES
AND NINE OTHER FEATURES

GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

भवन्त्यपि निष्फलैव धनऋद्धिर्भवति कृपाणपुरुषस्य ।
ग्रीष्मातपसन्तप्तस्य निजकच्छायेव पथिकस्य ॥

*Bhavantyaṇi niṣphalaiva dhanarḍḍhirbhavati kṛpaṇapuruṣasya
Grīṣmātapasantaptasya nijakacchāyeva pathikasya*

Wealth hoarded by a miser is of no use to him, just as in the
hot sun the traveller's own shadow is of no use to him.

The Gathasaptashati



Controlling Editor: NAGI REDDI

FESTIVALS OF INDIA

The festivals of India are much more than festivals. They are the windows into a remote past rich with great legends.

Those legends are not mere stories. Most of them are born of events that took place long long ago. They reveal the mind and the philosophy of a nation through the ages.

Our festivals are rooted in these legends. And the people of India take the festivals very seriously. Naturally, the past flows into the present through the festivals.

This vast land of more than 600 million people is marked by colourful diversity. There are festivals and festivals. Some of them are observed all over the country. Some are regional. No month passes without the people celebrating more than one festival.

Your magazine proposes to give you an account of India's festivals. It begins with the *Janmashtami* in this issue. The month is marked by other festivals too. Maybe, we shall cover them next August.

So, month after month, you will read the story and the significance of the festival of the month! This is a new feature in addition to the series, *True Life Adventures*, beginning in this issue.

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NEWS

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The Parrot's Gift of the Gab

Among other things, a lovely parrot was put up for auction. A man bade for it. He heard someone else offering a higher price. But he did not give up and ultimately bought it at the highest price. "Can it speak?" he then asked the auctioneer. "Speak? Who do you think was bidding against you?"

This could be a joke, but the six-year-old parrot belonging to a Ukrainian doctor is no joke. It knows at least a thousand words—and some nursery rhymes too. It is the most talkative parrot ever known.



The Gita on a Grain

Gobind Dodia (age 27), hailing from Gujarat, has carved 18 verses of the Bhagavat Gita on a grain of rice.

He has also inscribed "Satyameva Jayate" on a strand of hair. You can see it at the Community Centre, Bangalore.

Continuing our fairytale novella

THE LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN VALLEY

By Manoj Das

Story so far: In the Golden Valley an earthquake brings to light a beautiful image made of gold. The young Raju who discovers it, is given to understand that in a faraway land lies the secret of its life. Entrusting the statue to the care of the king of the valley, Raju enters the land of the Holy Dragon where the people knew not how to smile. He promises the king the boon of smile and is helped to pass on to the next land. He meets a hermit who had enclosed himself in a cave for a long long time. Both take a stroll down town.

7. TOWNSFOLK TAKE UP A CHALLENGE

The road down the hill was marked by flowery plants and creepers on both the sides. The hermit and Raju were soon near the gate at the foot of the hill. It was guarded by two strong men sporting colourful turbans and holding deadly tridents.

There was a small crowd on the other side of the gate.

"We are tourists. Can't we go up the hill?" one of the crowd asked the guards.

"No, not up this hill of the miraculous water-melon. The road up is meant for only one man—the chieftain—who goes there to command the size of the water-melon," replied a guard.

"The chieftain must be the descendant of the refugee to whom I had granted the boon of the miraculous melon," the hermit

whispered to Raju as both crossed the gate into the town.

"Is it not surprising that the guards did not question us?" asked Raju.

"Not surprising if you realise that we walk invisible at the moment! Also, we are inaudible to others," replied the hermit.

Raju was amazed.

They walked along a fashionable avenue till they reached a spacious hall—with "Silence" written on a large signboard atop its entrance. Some officials were walking up and down the lush green lawns around it, peeping inside from time to time.

"I remember this spot. It was a grove. I also remember telling them what they were to do here. Let's see," said the hermit. Both entered the hall.

In rows of easy chairs reclined scores of men and women. They had evidently fallen asleep. Many were snoring. The officials kept a record of the time one had slept at a stretch. Careful observation by the hermit and Raju also showed that those who snored loud scored higher marks. It seemed that at the end of a certain period prizes were awarded to those who slept the longest and snored the loudest.

The hermit's face glowed with anger. Suddenly he began kicking the chairs or tumbling the slumberers off them by pulling them by the hair. Raju had developed so much devotion for the hermit that he too did the same with great enthusiasm, though he knew nothing about the cause of the hermit's fury.

In a moment the silence of the hall was shattered with shrieks and cries. Panic was writ large on every face as none understood what tumbled them. The officials stood bewildered.

The hermit came out of the hall, followed by Raju.

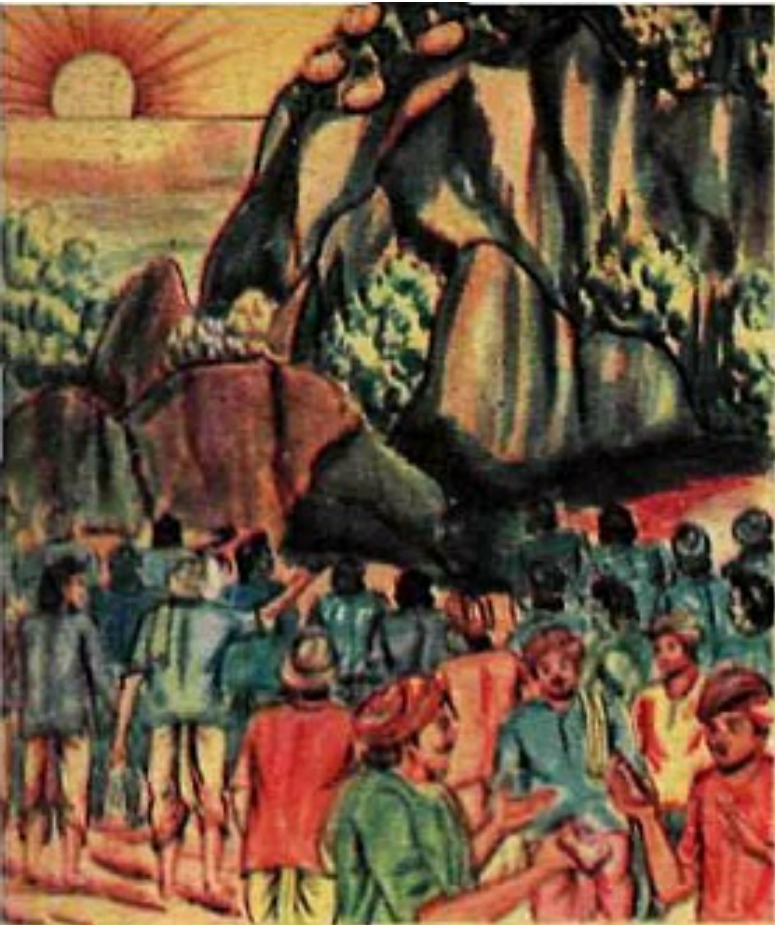
"What made you so worked up, Baba?" Raju asked massaging his own palms which he had so zealously used.



"Well, I had taught them how to meditate with eyes shut. In the course of time they have forgotten meditation and are competing with one another in lying asleep!" explained the hermit.

Before long they stood in front of some sort of a shrine. They stepped into its compound when the gate was about to be closed. They found themselves amidst the committee that manages the town. It included the chieftain, a young man.

"It is becoming more and more difficult to get hold of games. Luckily, we have been able to buy or kidnap all the 'Sins' this year. They are able-



bodied ones. The deity shall be happy to have them for her food," declared a tall man who looked quite important.

"Let's have a look at them," proposed the chieftain.

The committee was led by the tall man towards a large cage. The hermit and Raju followed them.

"This one is Lust; that fellow is Glutton, that bearded chap snarling at us is Wrath....." said the tall man.

Then they inspected the huge sword that was to be used for sacrificing those fellows.

"I feel like destroying this town at once!" shouted the her-

mit. Needless to say, nobody except Raju heard it. "I had taught them to sacrifice their lust, glutton and wrath to the deity. What they now do is sacrifice a few unfortunate captives after branding them as lust, glutton and wrath!"

Raju now understood what the tall man meant when he claimed that he had managed to collect all the 'Sins'!

A little more roaming in the town informed them of many more things. The town made a roaring business of the watermelon. Everyday in the evening the present chieftain climbed the hill and shouted out the number of people who were to partake of the melon. The number included visitors from the nearby areas. The miracle as well as the wonderful taste of the melon attracted them by the thousands. They were lodged in costly guest-houses and were allowed to have a glimpse of the great melon on the hill-top dazzling against the rising sun. They were of course required to pay heavily for the sight and for a small slice of the fruit.

Thus the townsfolk thrived on the boon that had once been granted to their hoary ancestor. They passed their time in slee-

ping-cum-snoring contests and holding annual ceremonies where they killed a few men stolen or bought from other lands.

By sundown the hermit and Raju were back on the hill-top. As they sat on a rock near the water-melon creeper, they saw a gaudily dressed young man climbing the hillock.

"Here comes the chieftain!" observed the hermit.

The young man came up whistling merrily, but was surprised to see the boulder that sealed the cave lying aside. He once peeped into the dark cave. A bit uncertain, he managed to mutter his order: "We need a melon to satisfy twenty thousand people tomorrow!"

"Twenty thousand, eh? Is your population that large?" asked the hermit from the rock. He had made himself and Raju visible.

The chieftain was taken aback. He did not expect to be challenged like that at a place where for years his was the only voice heard by himself!

"Who are you, Sir?" asked the young man.

"Why, have you never heard of the hermit who lived in the cave and who had ordained the



melon?" asked the hermit in his turn.

"But I thought that was only a legend!" muttered the young man.

"If the strange melon was a fact how can the hermit be a legend?"

The young man had no answer to the hermit's question. The hermit looked at Raju. "This is the irony of the situation. They will take the flowers for granted. They will never bother to think that there had to be an unseen artist behind the flowers—in conceiving and creating them!" he said with a sigh.

The young chieftain looked



nonplussed. He ran his fingers through his hair nervously. In a bid to regain his self-confidence, he said, "Hermit, Sir, it is nice you emerged from the cave. We can offer you a far more comfortable residence. I wonder if you had had any food for a few centuries. Come down and we will entertain you to delicious dishes. I'm sure many of the items we eat today had not been invented when you retired into the cage. Vegetarian or non-vegetarian?"

"Shut up!"

The hermit's voice surprised the young chieftain.

"You've not yet answered

my first question. Why do you want the melon to be big enough for satisfying twenty thousand people?" demanded the hermit.

"We are fifteen thousand, but we have five thousand visitors. They would pay. We can consider paying you a commission on the income. I've got another brilliant idea. Should you agree to sit on the melon and let them see you, we can demand an extra fee of them and a handsome part of it can go to you. Why do you get annoyed? I'm sure, you ought to eat and drink first." said the chieftain, trying to smile affably.

"Shut up, I say!"

This time the hermit's holler shook the region. "I shall produce a gigantic water-melon by tomorrow—for the last time. It will burst and that will be the end of your town. Begone!" said the hermit.

The young man turned and disappeared. The hermit sat silent for a long time, gazing at the horizon. The sun set and birds flew across the sky.

"I had thought that the miracle of the water-melon will keep the small community continuously aware of God," the hermit murmured as though to himself. "But I was a fool.

If the miracle of the sun and the stars hanging in empty space or the miracle of the lotus growing out of the mud fail to awaken any sense of serene wonder in their hearts, how can a magic melon do any better?"

"Baba! Your threat must have made them conscious of their folly. They must be repenting for having wasted the unique opportunity granted to them for a long time," said Raju.

"I don't think so. Stupidity has many faces. Why don't you go down and see?" suggested the hermit.

It was a full-moon night. Raju took a stroll through the town. To his great amazement he saw the chieftain lecturing to the townsfolk and preparing them to meet the hermit's challenge!

And they were to do it in a novel way. They were to stand ready with their mouths agape and swallow every bit of the water-melon when it would burst and descend on them as threatened by the hermit. This is how they meant to foil the possibility of their town being swept away.

Hectic preparations were afoot for the success of the scheme. All fasted for the night



so that they would be able to eat more of the melon. Thousands of their friends from the nearby localities responded to their call and came to join them in their exciting mission.

Raju felt sorry for them. He returned to the hermit by midnight.

By dawn he saw rows of people arrayed below the hill, their mouths agape. Atop the hill a melon, almost as big as the hill, was looming menacingly over them. In the mellow light of the rising sun it looked awful as well as magnificent.

Suddenly it burst and its roseate fragments rushed down-

ward.

People below grabbed at them and devoured them. If many were knocked down by the force of the flowing juice and the falling crumbs, they struggled and sat up and gobbled the sweet stuff with a vengeance.

In an hour nothing was left of the giant melon but scraps of its green crust.

Then the people gathered in a meeting and adopted a resolution congratulating themselves for their unity and achievement. The neighbours and the visitors began departing.

By noon the town looked desolate. The residents who had overeaten the melon were feeling uncomfortable. What

was worse, they did not know what to do next. They had been used to live on the melon for generations. The only trade they had known was showing and selling the melon to outsiders!

The hermit had said that the melon would burst and that would be the end of the town. The learned ones had now begun interpreting it differently. "The hermit did not mean that the exploded melon would destroy the town, but that the town would end up in misery because there would be no more melon," they observed.

It was evening. The hermit and Raju left the town behind them unnoticed by the brooding townsfolk. (To Continue)



JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

In the land of Canaan lived Jacob who had twelve sons. Among them he loved Joseph most. Once he gave Joseph a valuable coat.



When they were in the fields tending cattle, the jealous brothers threw Joseph into a dry well.



Later they did something wiser. They brought him out of the well and sold him to some travelling merchants.



The merchants led Joseph to Egypt and sold him to a rich man who had a wicked wife. Upon a false allegation by her, Joseph was thrown in jail.





One night a fellow prisoner dreamt of three vine branches - one with ripe fruits which he plucked and squeezed into the king's cup.

Joseph explained that the prisoner would be free in three days and serve the king. Indeed, the prisoner, freed, became the king's butler.



Once the king, had a queer dream: Out of a river first came seven bonny cows. Then came seven ugly cows who ate up the good ones.



At the butler's suggestion, Joseph was called from prison. He said that after seven years of plenty, there will be famine for seven years.



(To conclude in the next issue)

nowi...



The Clever Prince

Hundreds of years ago, there lived an emperor in China. He was famous for his wisdom and valour. He had no son, but only one daughter. From her father she inherited wisdom and from her mother, beauty. When her parents celebrated her sixteenth birthday, they decided to arrange for her marriage.

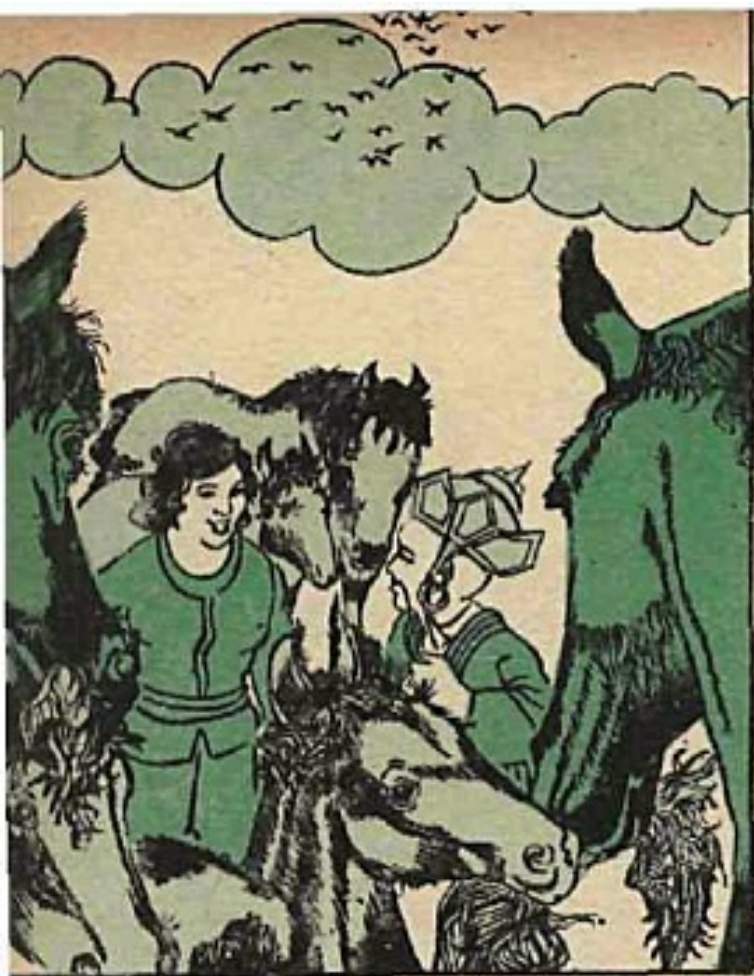
The news reached far and near. Kings and princes of many lands had already heard of the charming princess. So, a large number of them sent their envoys to ask for her hand.

The wise emperor sent them back saying that he would let them know his decision soon.

As there were many suitors for his daughter, the emperor

decided to hold a contest and choose the winner for his son-in-law. He wrote to all the kings and princes who had sent their envoys. His message read:

“We hereby inform you that a contest will be held for the selection of a bridegroom for the princess. The participants have to undergo three severe tests. Those who fail in all the three shall be beheaded. If there is more than one winner, they must undergo still difficult tests, till one becomes the winner. The winner will not only marry the princess, but also will become the heir-apparent to the emperor. Moreover, the emperor will also fulfil the winner's wish, whatever it may be



under the sun."

The kings and princes who read the emperor's letter knew that the offer was enticing. But what frightened them was the thought of losing their heads. Most of them decided that their heads were more precious than the princess and so they did not come.

But seven young and brave princes from various lands who cared a hazy for their lives resolved to compete for the hand of the beautiful princess.

Among them was the clever Prince of Tibet. He was not only handsome but also he had a wit sharper than the edge of

a sword.

A couple of days before the contest the seven bold princes rode to the capital of China. They were treated as royal guests.

On the appointed day, the seven princes accompanied the emperor to a vast open field. He ordered his servants to bring in five hundred foals and five hundred mares. When they were brought, he made his attendants tie up the mares and loosen the foals in the middle of the field. Then the emperor spoke to the seven princes:

"Young men! This is the first of the three tests. Here in this open field you will find five hundred mares with their foals of the same number. Whoever succeeds in matching each mare with her foal will be the winner. Go, try your fortune."

The Prince of Tibet did not immediately jump into action. He knew: "Before action comes thought." As he stood thinking, the other six princes tried their hands one after the other. When they led the foals to their mares, the mares neighed in disgust or kicked so that the frightened foals took to their heels. The six princes failed to match even one mare with her foal.

Now the Prince of Tibet was ready to meet the challenge. He requested the king to order for fine and fresh grass to be served for the mares. Cartloads of grass were spread before the mares. They ate their fill. They then threw up their heads and cried out for the foals. The foals jumped playfully and each one swiftly ran to its mother to suck her milk. And thus, the clever Prince of Tibet paired off the five hundred mares and their foals without much effort on his part.

The emperor was delighted. He congratulated the prince and declared that he had won in the first test. Asking the failed competitors to sharpen their talents, he bade them all come back the next day for the second test.

In the morning of the next day all the seven princes gathered in the emperor's court. The emperor had in his hand an intricately carved piece of green jade. He showed it to the princes and said, "Look at this green jade, gentlemen. It appears to have hundreds of holes but in fact it has only one. And even that is a tiny hole that twists and turns through this green jade. Well, here is a



string of thread. All you have to do is to pass this thread through that hole in the green jade."

The six princes one after another tried to find out the hole and slip the thread into it. The hole was so tiny that it was difficult to make it out from the false ones. They failed in their attempts, though all took more than the time given.

Came the turn of the Prince of Tibet. He requested the royal attendants for a few drops of honey. He caught an ant and tied the thread to its body. He then put the ant on one side of the jade, while he rubbed the honey on the other side.



Next day the emperor ordered his carpenters to work on a great tree-trunk to bring each end of it to the same size. It was equally smoothened and polished at both ends.

When the emperor called for the competitors, he was surprised to find all the seven present. No one had tried to evade the danger.

"I appreciate your fearlessness. All of you deserve to be rulers," observed the emperor. He then showed them the tree trunk and asked, "Tell me which is the upper end and which the lower. You must give reasons for your opinion. Think well before you come out with your answers! Remember your heads!"

While the Prince of Tibet looked on, the other six princes examined the trunk. But the carpenters had shaped the trunk in such a way that none of them was able to distinguish the top from the bottom. They lost hope. Their hearts galloping pit-a-pat, they looked at the Prince of Tibet.

The Prince of Tibet asked the servants to lower the trunk into the moat. As the water in the moat flowed slowly, the trunk too floated very slowly on the

The ant smelt the honey and quickly crawled through the hole and came out on the other side, dragging with it the thread. The Prince of Tibet knotted the thread and gave the jade back to the emperor.

The emperor joyfully proclaimed that he has won the second test. He then told all, "Come tomorrow for the third test, the most difficult of all. And that will determine your fates. Remember our caution: Those who fail in all the three tests shall be beheaded. Those afraid of participating in the third test can very well go home and save their heads."

water until by degrees the lighter end slanted upward. The prince immediately said: "The upward end is the top and the downward the bottom."

"How?" asked the Emperor.

"Your Majesty! A trunk is always heavier at the base. And that is why the heavier base slanted down while the upper end showed up," replied the Prince.

Overjoyed, the Emperor of China embraced the Prince of Tibet and said, "O brave and wise prince, you will marry my daughter and become heir to my throne. Tomorrow we celebrate the marriage in a grand fashion. And you are also entitled to ask whatever you want. Come on with it. It will be granted."

The Prince of Tibet thought for a while and said, "Your

Majesty! Since tomorrow will be the day of my marriage, it will also be a day of joy. Everyone in the vast empire will make merry while these six princes, sad at heart, await the axe to fall on their necks. I request you to spare their lives and allow them to take part in the ceremony before they depart for their homes."

The emperor smiled and said, "It is not my desire to behead any prince, my son. I had given the false warning just to lessen the number of participants. Further I wished to find out how many of the kings and princes were ready for adventure and prepared to lose their lives for the sake of it. Now I understand that there are only seven fearless princes, and you are the best of the lot."

—Retold by P. Raja





THE FISHERMAN'S REWARD

In days gone by there was a king in Persia who was fond of good fish.

One day while he was enjoying a stroll in the garden in the company of his minister, a palace-guard informed him that a certain fisherman had brought a fish that was of a rare variety and quite a large one too.

The king bade the guard to usher in the fisherman and his fish to his presence. When that was done, he was amazed to see the fish. He had never seen the like of it.

"Ask the treasurer to give this worthy fisherman a hundred gold coins," he instructed

the guard. The happy fisherman saluted him and left the garden.

"My lord, a hundred gold coins for a fish! Nobody would have given him even one gold coin!" complained the minister.

"But I am the king, am I not? I must give according to my status!" said the king.

"Your status is great, my lord, but when the courtiers would know that you had given a hundred gold coins for a fish, they would expect big rewards from you for everything!" cautioned the minister. "No, my lord, you should modify your decision," he added.

"But how to do that?" asked the king.

"It is easy, my lord, ask the fisherman whether the fish is male or female. If he says that it is a male fish, you can tell him that you had thought it to be female and that is why you had proposed the reward of a hundred gold coins. If he says

hat it is a female fish, you can say that you had thought it to be male. In any case he can forfeit the reward!" counselled the minister.

The fisherman was called back. "I wish to know whether the fish is male or female," said the king.

"My lord, you, who decided to give me a hundred gold coins at the very sight of the fish, would no doubt give me more if I could say whether it was a male or a female. But it is my misfortune that I am ignorant of it. Maybe, the wise minister can say," the fisherman said humbly.

"You deserve another hundred gold coins for your honesty," exclaimed the king and he ordered his treasurer to pay the fisherman accordingly.

The fisherman bowed to the king and went out. The minister's face fell.

The fisherman, after receiving his reward, came to thank the king. When he was leaving, a single coin fell down from his bag and got hidden in the sand.

The fisherman began looking for it.

"See, my lord, what a greedy fellow he is. He has received two hundred gold coins. But he



is not prepared to forgo even one coin. Besides, is it not indecent of him to crouch and look for the coin in your sight? I am sure he did not deserve your generosity," said the minister.

This time the king felt somewhat annoyed with the fisherman.

"Come here, you greedy fellow," he commanded. The fisherman who had recovered his coin, came forward and saluted him.

"I have given you much money, haven't I?" demanded the king.

"My lord, who but you could

have given me so much!" replied the fisherman.

"Why then were you so keen to recover a single coin that slipped from your bag?" asked the king haughtily.

"My lord, it is not the coin, but you that mattered!" replied the fisherman.

"What do you mean?"

"My lord, the coin carries your name on one side and a picture of your head on the other side. I was afraid, if I leave it where it fell, a gardener

or a servant might set his foot on it! How can I knowingly let anybody tread on your name and figure?" explained the fisherman.

"Bravo! A thousand gold coins for you!" shouted the king joyfully.

Along with a thousand more gold coins the treasurer gave the fisherman a strong leather bag to carry the amount so that not a single coin fell down.

The minister looked gloomy for the rest of his life.



He Stood Like a Rock

A serene daybreak was taking place on the horizon. The sea was quiet. All was well.

The crew of the British ship, the Drake, were singing and whistling, doing their jobs with ease. Their master, Captain Charles Baker, was a loving soul. He was happy if his men were jolly.

But there was a thick fog. They expected the fog to slowly disappear as the daylight grew brighter. In 1822 the ships lacked many of the scientific facilities through which the seamen of today can read the weather.

There was a bang and a gigantic splash! The ship had struck a

hidden rock. The collision was so hard that the ship at once swerved to a side. A mad wind had begun blowing just before that. The sail of the ship was torn asunder. What is worse, high waves started sweeping the reclining battered ship.

The ship had three boats. Among them one was very small, meant only for the captain. A strong wave tumbled one boat off the ship. It was seen riding the wave and then being tossed about hopelessly, to disappear in no time.

The captain directed the other boat to be launched. It was done, but another giant wave ran over it and sank it before





breaking on the deck.

All was obscure with the thick cold mist. At some distance could be located the outline of a rock. Nobody knew how far the land was. At the moment the rock was the only possible shelter.

The captain's small boat was taken out. The young boatswain, Turner, said that he could try to reach the rock. One end of a rope was tied to his waist. He boarded the small boat and rowed towards the rock. Time and again he was thought to have been swallowed up by the waves, but his figure reappeared at the distance, to the joy of his

friends who looked on with rapt attention.

At last his boat touched the rock. He had just taken hold of a stone when strong breeze pushed the boat away—to crush it against the rock the very next moment.

But Turner had won his victory. He held the rope tight and shouted for his mates to come over.

The ship was in a precarious condition. It was breaking up. Any moment the plank could disappear from beneath the feet of those who clung on to it.

“Go over to the rock!” ordered Captain Baker.

“Captain! You must go first. Only then we go!” said so many voices in unison. No doubt, they loved their noble captain.

“Get going! I shall move only after the last one has left the ship! Let me not repeat my order!” said Captain Baker in a stern voice.

His crew knew that voice. It was useless to argue with him. They left—one at a time. The captain strained his eyes to see the last one scrambling on to the rock. Only then, after casting a sad look on his sinking ship, he jumped into the waves.

and reached the rock.

The weather was worsening, but the fog was thinning. After a while they could see that the land was not far. It was a great discovery! The tide was rising and to remain on the small rock would mean to get drowned in a short time.

Turner the boatswain rose to the occasion again! With the rope tied round his waist, once more he braved into the fury of the wind and the waves.

Others looked on with bated breath. Soon they heard a lusty cheer. "I have arrived!" announced Turner at the pitch of his voice. How much solace and confidence his broken words

brought to the hearts of those standing on the desolate rock!

"This time, Captain, it must be you to proceed first!" said the crew entreating upon their master.

"Never. I must proceed last," was the captain's response.

One by one his men got going. The captain clapped his frozen hands each time he knew that one of his men had landed on the shore. They were fifty and it took a long time for fortyfour of them to go over to safety.

The rock was about to be submerged. But only six more were left—including the captain.



As usual the captain signalled the next sailor to move. But there lay a woman, almost dying with fear and cold. The sailor was willing to carry her on his shoulder, holding her with one hand and holding the rope with the other. There was no way to save her but this. The captain consented to it and wished the sailor success.

But the weight of the two proved too much for the weakening rope. It snapped when the brave sailor was midway. The sailor gave out a cry and was seen no more. The woman had already swooned away. She knew not when the sea claimed her.

Those on the shore ran in all directions. They found a rope

in a farmhouse and came back with it.

But where was the rock and where was the captain? He had last been seen, through the fog, standing atop the rock with arms crossed on his chest—himself like a rock.

There were terrible waves as far as the eye could see. The rock had gone under the rising tide—gone along with the noble captain!

The surviving crew, all in one voice, said gratefully that but for the captain's firmness, his spirit of sacrifice, and Turner's allegiance to him, all would have perished. In a chapel at Portsmouth a tablet commends the inspiring example set by Captain Baker.



THE TYRANT AND THE GATE-KEEPER

Once upon a time there was a king named Mahapingala. Never was there another man as harsh in speech and as cruel in his deeds as that king.

People trembled when he passed by them. He laughed like a ghoul and put innocent men and women to torture.

Anybody who slightly offended him was put to death. He enjoyed burning villages. His officers looted the poor subjects to their last coins.

He gorged like a demon and

liked to see bizarre black magic while he ate. He had no interest in anything fine—music or art.

Strange though it might sound, this brute of a man had for his son the Bodhisattva—the very soul that was to be reborn as the Buddha much later. The Bodhisattva was a charming young prince, loved alike by the courtiers and the subjects.

To everybody's great relief King Mahapingala died suddenly. No one tried to hide his happiness over the event.



In fact, there were spontaneous feasts and sports to celebrate his death. Some people went on laughing for hours—as if they had gone mad!

But the people were happy not just because the tyrant had died, but also because the loving prince, the Bodhisattva, was to ascend the throne. As the day of the coronation neared, their happiness increased.

At an auspicious hour the prince was led to the temple. After the priests had offered their prayers to the deity for the welfare of the prince, he rode an elephant and went towards the palace. There were

decorated arches on the way. At every arch the prince was greeted by officers and noblemen who were all smiles.

But when the prince reached the palace gate, he marked that the gate-keeper looked as terrified as he used to look when Mahapingala the tyrant was alive.

Bodhisattva got off his elephant and went near the gate-keeper. He observed the gate-keeper trembling with fear, as usual. "My friend, why do you seem so terrified?" asked the prince.

"It is for King Mahapingala, O noble Prince," answered the



gate-keeper.

The prince and those who followed him were surprised. "Don't you remember that King Mahapingala is no more?" asked the prince.

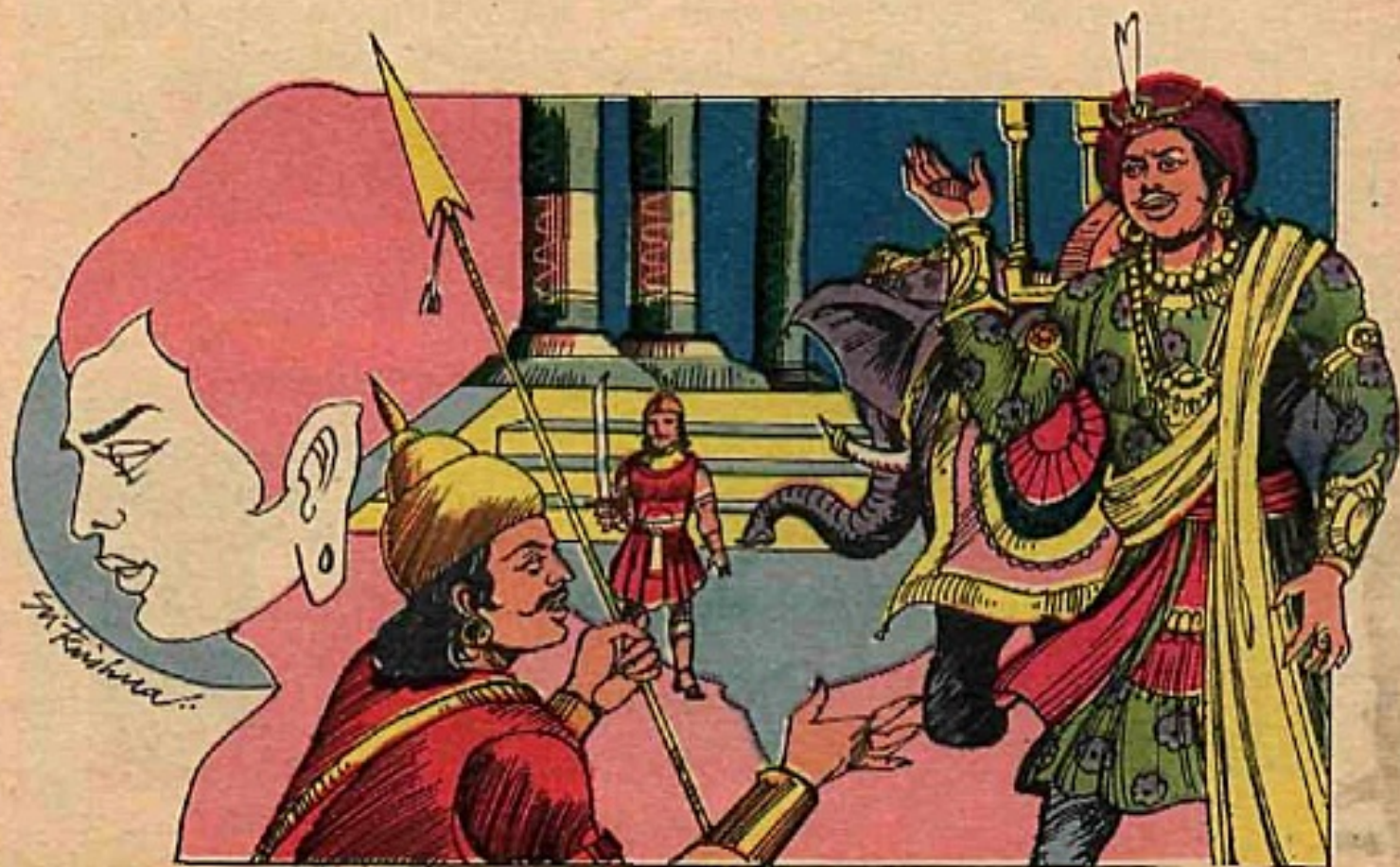
"I know. It was his habit to plant a blow or two on my head whenever he entered the gate or went out. It gave him great joy to see me fall down and roll on the ground. I am sure it will be his pleasure to do the same to the God of Death who stands receiving people at the gate of the world of the dead. No doubt, the scared God of Death will deem it fit to send the king back to life.

It will be for me to receive the blows again!" explained the gate-keeper.

The prince laughed and so did all the rest. "My friend," said the prince addressing the gate-keeper, "rest assured that the old king will never return. Did you not see how his body was reduced to ashes under a thousand cartloads of wood set to fire? When he is reborn, he will get a different body and we will not know where he is."

The gate-keeper bowed to the prince and smiled for the first time in many years.

—*From the Buddha Jatakas*



THE RIGHT THING TO DO

A young man named Phani met the king and prayed for a job. The king felt that he was a good-natured youth. He put him in one of his offices.

Soon it was noticed that the young man came to the office very late and left the office very early - regularly.

The minister called him and called for an explanation.

"Sir, I spend several hours in the temple singing the Lord's glory. After all, He has created me!" explained Phani.

"Why don't you sing the king's glory too? Is it not he who has given you work?" asked the minister.

"That is right," said Phani. From the very next day he regularly visited the court and sang the king's glory. The king got annoyed on the third day and dismissed him from his post.

He ran to the minister and cried out, "Sir, I followed your advice and I was punished!"

"Young man, the king gave you a post in his office expecting work from you, not for your singing his praise. God created you for your living truthfully and doing your duty with honesty and sincerity, not for idling away your time in the temple," said the minister.

Phani got back his job. He worked sincerely.





STORY OF INDIA — THE GUIDE THROUGH THE DESERT

An ambitious king, Shiladitya, ruled Kashmir in the 7th century. He was never tired of battles. Once he was out to conquer a small kingdom that bordered the Gobi desert. He had prepared well for the expedition.

On the way suddenly a man came running and threw himself on the ground before the king's horse. The king stopped. His spies recognised the man—who was none other than the minister of the kingdom Shiladitya was out to attack.



The minister recounted his story: he had advised his king to surrender their kingdom to the mighty Shiladitya. But his king spurned the advice and abused Shiladitya and whipped the minister. Shiladitya embraced the minister and consoled him.



"I shall avenge your humiliation," Shiladitya told the minister. "My lord, if you proceed through the normal route, it will take three months. I know a short-cut through the desert. You can reach our kingdom in a fortnight," the minister confided to Shiladitya.

Shiladitya decided to take to the short-cut. No water would be available in the desert. At the minister's advice, he arranged to collect drinking water to last a fortnight. They entered the desert, led by the minister.



The journey through the desert was tiring and monotonous. The sun was severe and there was no shade anywhere. Fifteen days passed. The stock of water was finished. Some of the horses and elephants died.



The minister kept on saying that they would reach the destination soon. But no human habitation was on sight. Soon sun-stroke began killing the soldiers. The officers looked pale and told the king that this cannot go on!

"When do we reach?" Shilditya demanded of the minister. "O King, you'll soon reach the final destination, the abode of death! You'll kill me, but you'll all die for lack of water—whether you go back or forward!" told the minister bluntly.



The minister confessed that to save his small kingdom from destruction, he had taken a grand risk. He had got himself whipped by his friends to convince Shilditya that his king had humiliated him. "Now kill me," he said, kneeling down.



The strong-minded Shiladitya began a search for water. There was a water-diviner in his party. At his advice he ordered his soldiers to dig at a certain spot. The digging went on, but to no avail. All were disheartened.

They dug deep, but there was nothing except dry sand. Even Shiladitya was disheartened. Suddenly water sprang up. There was great rejoicing. Shiladitya filled up all the vessels with water before beginning the return-journey.



Shiladitya told the minister: "I did not kill you because you'd have died along with us. Now that Nature proved kind to us, we should also be kind to you and spare your life. I appreciate your patriotism!"

OVER AND ABOVE

Janaki, while drawing water from the village well, leaned onto it. She did not know when her gold necklace had become loose. It slipped into the water.

It was a deep well. There was only one man in the neighbouring village who knew the art of diving. But he demanded fifty rupees for the job. Janaki did not agree to his demand.

Janaki saw Jagusingh passing by. He was a notorious thief, but he was never caught red-handed. That is why he was never punished.

Janaki spoke about the lost necklace a bit loud so that Jagusingh could hear her. Jagusingh did not show that he had heard anything.

At night Jagusingh dived into the well and found the necklace. But as soon as he came out, villagers who were hiding caught him.

Janaki got back her necklace without spending a paisa. Over and above that Jagusingh was caught in the act of stealing.



In and around The



thousand men's food. Even then there was no sign of any end to his appetite!

"Meenakshi was informed of his strange feat. She came out with a dish of sweets and offered it to Gandodara. No sooner had he finished the dish than he stood up with contentment, all smiles.

"Now he desired to drink water. If he needed water to match his food, the tank in the palace courtyard was likely to dry up.

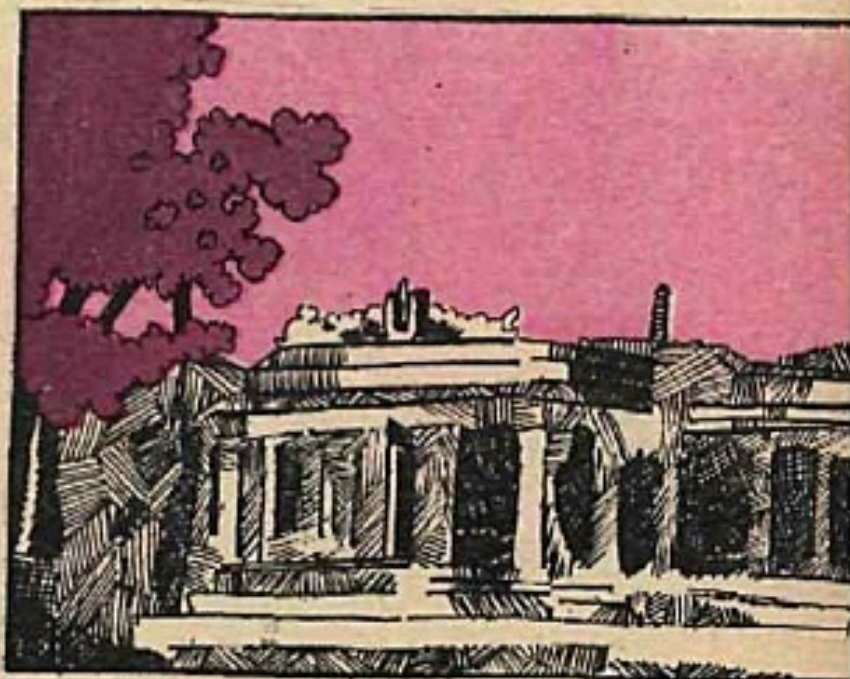
"Vaigai!" said Meenakshi. That meant, 'Put your hand down!' Gandodara did so. Under his hand sprang up a river. He was happy to drink

"It happened during the marriage of Meenakshi with Sundareswar—who was Lord Shiva.

"Among the attendants of Shiva was a jolly good creature called Gandodara. Whenever he was happy, he ate; if he was happier, he ate more!

"For him there had never been a happier occasion than the marriage of his Master. And if there was one place where he could go on eating without any hesitation, it was of course his Master's bride's place!

"So, he ate on and on and on. He ate a hundred men's food, five hundred men's food, a

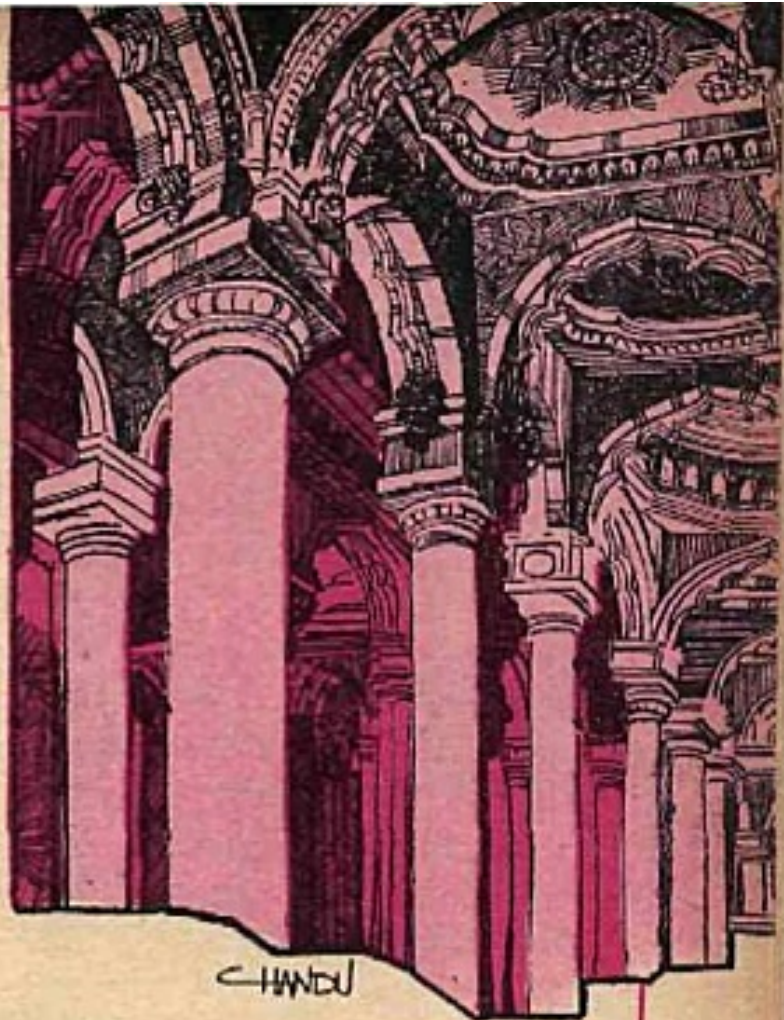


City of Madurai

the fresh water of the young river which luckily did not dry up. In fact, the river flows on to this day," said Mr. Sadasivam when he took Ravi, Raman, and Shyam Gupta for a drive.

They saw the magnificent palace of the Naik rulers the largest and the most beautiful palace existing in South India. The imposing pillars and strikingly designed corridors with arches were unique specimens of a majestic style in architecture.

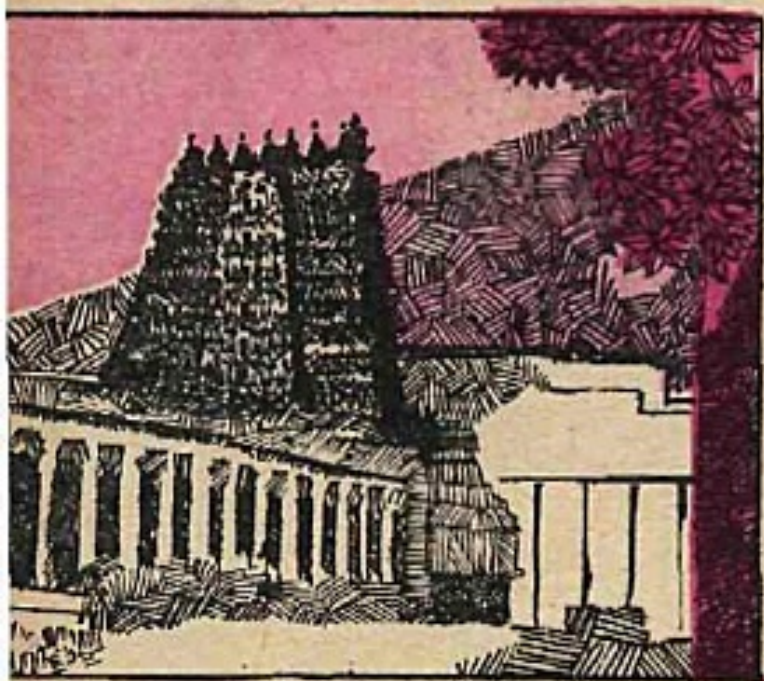
Mr. Sadasivam drove them up to a charming spot 18 kilometres away. At the foot of a bushy hill was an old temple – Alagar Koil. The deity, Alagar, is known to be Goddess Meena-



kshi's brother. Once a year he pays a visit to his sister's shrine, on the occasion of her marriage anniversary. There are resting places for him on his way to the city. His journey and the marriage anniversary make a grand festival. The temple of Alagar is rich with sculpture.

A path went up the hill behind the temple. At the top of the hill was a spring. It was a fine spot for spending an hour or two.

"What a nice place this city of Goddess Meenakshi and its surrounding!" the boys remarked on the eve of leaving Madurai.



THE HEAVY BURDEN

There was a holy man who was always jolly. He kept everybody happy with his humour.

He was down with fever and his condition grew worse day by day. But he never complained.

"How are you feeling, guruji?" asked a disciple.

"Quite heavy!" said the holy man. The disciples looked at one another. They were sad—for their guru had at last spoken about the feeling of discomfort he was having.

The holy man was seen smiling. "Am I not carrying the burden of four persons all alone?" he asked. The disciples did not understand him immediately.

But they understood soon. The holy man passed away the same day. Four persons were required to carry his body to the site of his burial!





*New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire*

TREACHERY?

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Flashes of lightning revealed fearful faces. Along with the roar of thunder and the howl of jackals was heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He returned to the ancient tree, climbed it, and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse, said! "O King, I know not what is the ideal that has inspired you to undertake such pains. Sometimes people take unexpected steps to realise the ideals they cherish. Let me cite an example to prove my point. Listen with attention. That might bring you some relief."

The vampire went on: Years ago lived a sage who decided to found a school. The school was meant to impart moral and

ideal education. The sage hoped that students passing out of his school would serve the country well.

He roamed about raising funds for the school. But that took most of his time. He could not pay sufficient attention to the education of the students.

"Let me ask the king to finance the school. That should end my worry," he thought.

But the king, upon hearing his appeal, said, "Good man, if you could run the school all these days without my help, why can't you continue to run it?

Besides, if you are bringing out ideal boys, their parents ought to help you!"

The sage was in no mood to argue with the king. He returned disappointed and thought of closing down the school.

Unexpectedly a man named Jagatsingh met the sage and said, "Please do not close down the school. I shall give you all the money you need."

"Who are you?" asked the sage.

"Never mind that. You will get your money regularly, on the first day of every month!" replied Jagatsingh.

The sage felt highly encour-



aged. Jagatsingh kept his word. He submitted his donation without fail.

On enquiry the sage learnt that Jagatsingh was a well-known philanthrope. People thought highly of him.

Days passed. One day a shocking news reached the sage. He heard that Jagatsingh, who posed to be a philanthrope, was in fact the chief of a notorious gang of bandits. His secret activities had come to the king's knowledge. The police were trying to catch him, but he had gone into hiding.

The sage met the king's minister and asked him if it was

true. The minister gave him all the proofs and convinced him that Jagatsingh was a dangerous bandit. He had even a hand behind the death of some men who tried to expose him.

A week after this information had reached the sage, Jagatsingh came to the sage to hand over his donation.

"I am grateful to you for your help. I pray to God to save your soul. But you ought not to escape the consequence of your activities in the society," said the sage. He then clapped his hands. Police who were in hiding sprang out and took hold of Jagatsingh at once.



The king thanked the sage and gave him the necessary funds to run the school.

The vampire paused for a moment and then demanded of the king: "Tell me, O king, how could the sage take recourse to such treachery? But for Jagatsingh, his school would have closed down. How could the sage forget that? Where was the need for his pleasing the king by betraying Jagatsingh? How could he accept help from the very king who had once refused to help him? Answer me, if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your shoulders."

Answered King Vikram forthwith: "Had the sage accepted Jagatsingh's donation knowing him to be a bandit and then helped the police in capturing

him, we could have accused the sage of treachery. But that was not the case. The sage had a mission and that was to serve the country by producing ideal boys. Had he let Jagatsingh remain at large, he would have gone against his own ideal.

"The sage had no personal ambition. He had founded the school for the welfare of the people. It is with the same motive that he got the bandit arrested. He had no intention of pleasing the king. The king was pleased because the bandit was caught. It would have been foolish to refuse the king's help for the school. The king's treasury was meant for the welfare of the people."

No sooner had King Vikram concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.





Three Officers

King Subhendra of Sompur was known to be an ideal ruler. Justice prevailed in his kingdom and his officers were praised for their efficiency.

The king of Visalagarh grew curious to know how King Subhendra achieved this. He sent his minister to Sompur to study King Subhendra's policy.

The minister travelled through Sompur, spending several days at important towns and villages. He talked to different people. He understood that if the kingdom enjoyed a sound rule it was mainly due to the king. The king was keen to see that the people got justice. He hated flattery. That is why nobody could find favour with him by praising him. Honesty alone pleased him.

A class of officials rode from village to village. They kept

the king informed of all that was happening. Moreover, the king himself toured his kingdom once or twice a year. He checked the work of his officers and his subjects could talk to him freely.

When King Subhendra was out for one such tour, the minister of Visalagarh, with his permission, joined his party.

The king reached a town called Roygram. The chief of the king's kachahri there was found standing on the verandah of the kachahri. He was surprised to see the king and bowed down to him.

"Why are you standing outside?" asked the king.

"My lord, the employees have a tendency to come late. But if I keep standing here, they come on time," replied the chief.

"Is there nobody else to keep



standing here?" asked the king.

"This is the durwan's place, my lord, but will the officials care for him? They can easily threaten him or please him. They are afraid of me because I am their boss," explained the chief.

The king smiled and said, "I understand your argument, but I cannot appreciate it. If you are to stand here, why was the place meant for the durwan? This is not the way to maintain discipline. You must come on time and do your work most sincerely. Example is the best influence. After that if you find

someone to be negligent in his duty, you should warn him or punish him or dismiss him. But the method you are following will degrade your position."

The officer kept quiet. The king camped there for two days, supervised the work of the office, heard the villagers, and then moved on.

It was not disclosed where the king headed. Even then it was seen that the kachahri at Bhimpur, his next halt, had been decorated with flowers and festoons and the chief officer was ready to receive the king with a fresh garland.

The chief was sure that the arrangements would please the king. But the king looked grave.

"I could have gone somewhere else. How were you so sure that I'd be here?" asked the king.

The officer could not give any satisfactory reply to it. By and by the king understood that the officer had been expecting him for the last three days. Every day fresh flowers were gathered and the office decorated. No other work was carried on in the office.

"I suspect those who try to please me through such means

instead of through good work," observed the king. He scrutinised the files in the office and found out that there had been many lapses. The chief officer was corrupt.

He dismissed the officer forthwith and moved on to the next office at Kusumpur.

"How are you faring?" he asked the chief officer at Kusumpur.

"Fine, my lord. The people here have developed an impression that my presence in the town is 'auspicious for them,'" reported the officer smiling proudly.

"Is that so? How did the people develop such an impression?" queried the king.

"My lord, during the last year there were twenty condolence meetings here. But I did not preside over even one of them!" stated the chief.

"I did not understand you!" said the king with some curiosity.

"My lord, whenever a meeting is held in this town, I preside over it. There were twenty deaths during the year and there were twenty condolence meetings. But I did not preside over them because I was not here. The people believe that no death



occurs when I am here!" explained the officer.

"This means you were out of station for at least twenty times during the year! Is that not surprising?" remarked the king gravely.

The officer's face fell. This aspect of the situation had not struck him. The king, through his investigation, found out that the officer slipped away every now and then from his place of work and spent time at home in his village, looking after his property.

"Better you be at home permanently," said the king, transferring him to a minor post in



his own village. A new officer took charge of the office at Kusumpur.

"Let us go back to our capital," announced the king.

"What about your other offices, my lord?" asked the minister of Visalagarh.

"It is not necessary to visit all. The news of my visit to these three offices and the consequences would reach the other officers. They would get their lessons," said the king.

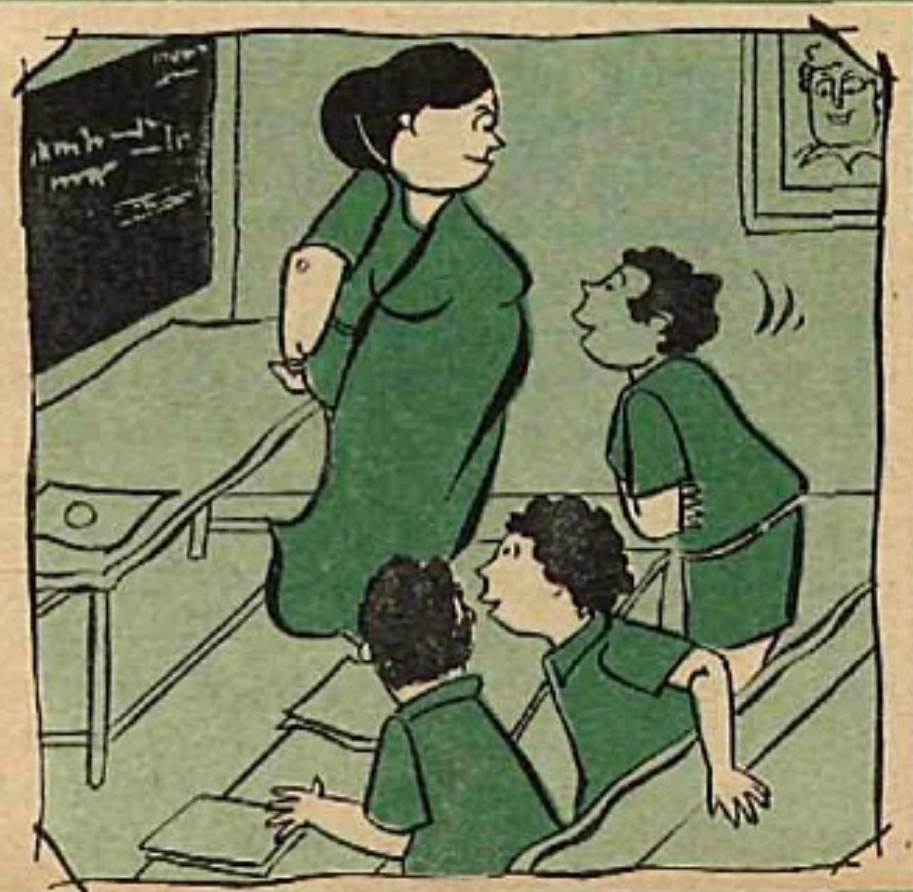
The minister returned to his kingdom, much wiser.

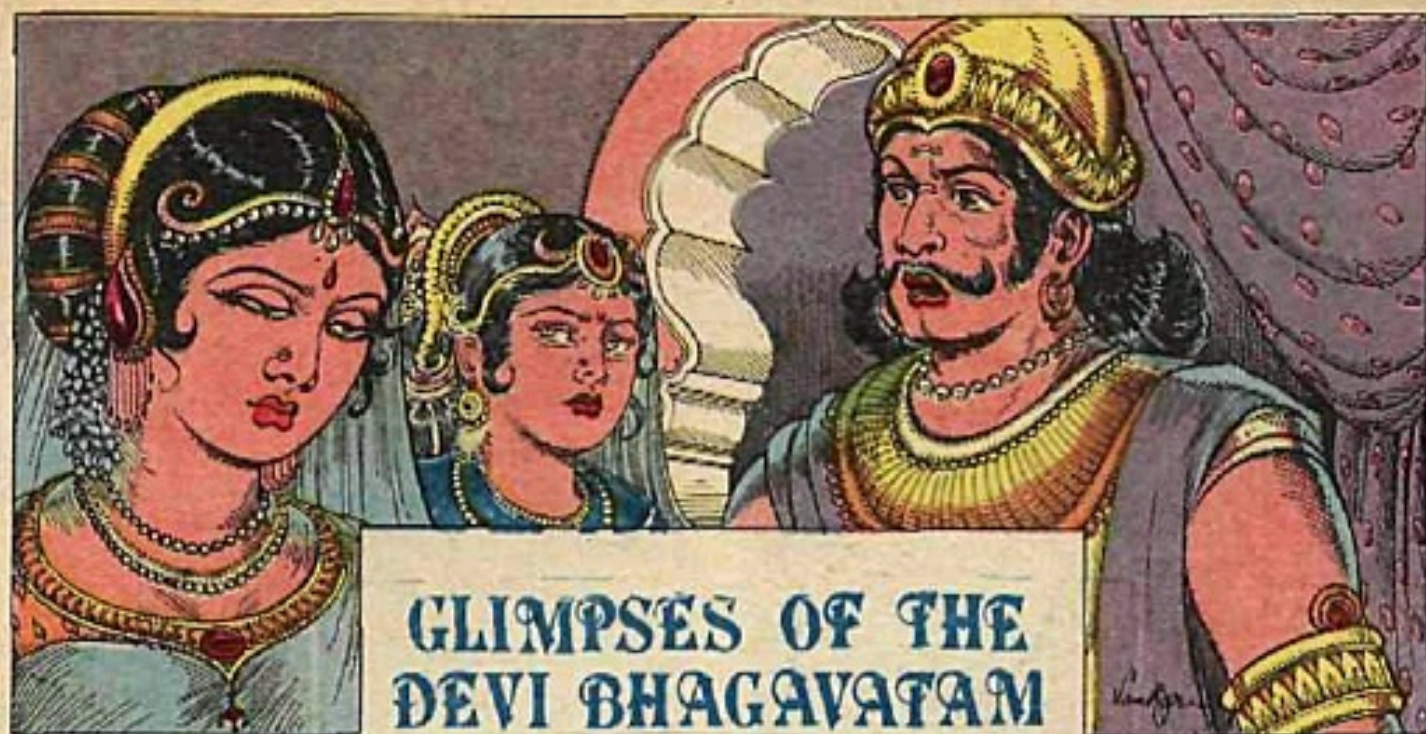
Teacher :

You know that heat expands things and cold contracts them. Can you give an example?

Student :

The day is long in the summer.





GLIMPSES OF THE DEVI BHAGAVATAM

Subahu, the king of Kashi, was stunned at the threat held out by King Yudhajit. He silently went inside his castle and told his queen, "I'm afraid, we cannot avert a crisis unless our daughter changes her mind and decides to marry someone other than Sudarshan."

The queen told the princess, "My child, Yudhajit is a cruel man. How can you ever be happy living under his threat? I don't mind what he might do to us. But I cannot be in peace worrying about your fate if you marry Sudarshan."

The princess kept quiet for a moment. Then she said in a

firm voice, addressing his parents, "There are only two ways open to us: either I take my own life, or you marry me to Sudarshan. Should you let me marry him, we should leave for the forest. Some wicked princes might give us a chase. Never mind. God will take care of us."

The king and the queen felt deeply moved. Said the king, "Shashikala, how can we live if you are no more? Is it not for your safe living that I am worried? Let me keep a test before the princes and announce that the one to pass the test would win your hand. I feel confident



that none but Sudarshan would pass it."

The princess laughed. "Father, what assurance is there that Yudhajit would leave us in peace 'even if Sudarshan passes the test? No, father, let us be straight. Have faith in the Grace of the Divine Mother and let me marry Sudarshan, come what may!"

The indulgent father agreed to his daughter's suggestion. He appeared before the assembly of the invitees and told them, "I request you to retire to your camps for today. You will know my decision tomorrow."

The assembly dispersed. The

king took his general into confidence. The general posted guards around the castle.

It was night. At an auspicious hour Shashikala's marriage with Sudarshan was performed.

"My dear sister! I entrust my loving daughter to you," the king told Queen Manorama, Sudarshan's mother.

"You are a noble soul, my brother! It speaks of your courage and kindness that you let your charming daughter marry my son who lives in exile," said Manorama.

Answered king Subahu, "My sister, no longer should you consider yourself to be hapless. Myself, my castle, my army, and my kingdom are at your disposal. I do not expect much trouble. But should there be any, I am ready to face it with all my might. I have prayfully submitted my problem to the Divine Mother—and I feel quite fearless."

"In your speech I hear the voice of God. I feel as if our luck has begun to take a turn towards the better. My innocent son, who should be enjoying the luxury of his palace, has been living in a forest. Maybe, time has come for him to assert

himself," said Manorama.

The marital music was at first played softly. But soon the musicians lost control over their enthusiasm. They played their instruments louder and louder.

"What is this? Is King Subahu performing his daughter's marriage without our knowledge?" some of the guests asked some others, at dawn.

Before long the king met them and said, "Be pleased to come in and bless the newly-wed couple. I must confess that I had to marry my daughter off to the bridegroom of her choice rather secretly, for I feared trouble from some quarters."

It was obvious that the guests did not take the king's statement kindly.

The king understood their minds. He said again, "My noble friends, please do not misunderstand me. I tried my best to convince my daughter that she should appear before you all and make her choice. But she refused to do so. She even threatened to kill herself if I did not let her marry Prince Sudarshan. You are a conscientious lot. You will excuse me, I trust. Please come in and partake of the feast."

"Do not bother to entertain



us, O King Subahu. You have passed the night sleepless. Go and have some rest," said the princes. Subahu could not be sure of their attitude. He returned into his castle.

Some of the princes were heard to say, "King Subahu has insulted us. We ought to teach him a lesson!"

"What is the gain? Better we behave and go back peacefully," said some others.

Inside the castle preparations were afoot for the bride's journey to her husband's place. A number of spies as well as some friendly princes whispered to the king, "Please do not let the



couple leave the castle now. The enemy, like a pack of hungry beasts, is waiting to pounce upon them."

The king, naturally, was in favour of detaining the couple. But Sudarshan told him, "My lord, don't have any fear on account of us. The Divine Mother will protect us. I shall lead your daughter safely to my hut. I have no palace. But my forest is in no way less beautiful than any palace."

The king did not like to stand in his way. He bade them farewell. A regiment of his army accompanied them.

Even then King Subahu could

not be free from anxiety. He too followed them.

Outside the town Yudhajit lay in ambush with his soldiers and a few foolish princes. "Here they come!" he shouted when he sighted Sudarshan's chariot. With his sword drawn he leaped up from his hiding. King Subahu did not take long to recognise his voice. He jumped forward and faced him.

Fighting broke out. Sudarshan, calm and composed, prayed to the Divine Mother calling for Her intervention. Suddenly, to everybody's surprise, there appeared a luminous female figure riding a lion, at the very midst of the battle.

Yudhajit's elephants were panicky at the sight of the roaring lion. "Look here, my soldiers, the Divine Mother is here to protect us. Go forward fearlessly and destroy the enemy!" shouted Sudarshan.

"What! Should you get frightened at the sight of a woman, a prince without a kingdom, and an old king? Come on, let us crush them!" shouted Yudhajit, addressing his soldiers and the collaborating princes.

But he had hardly finished giving out his call when he was struck by a lethal arrow. He

fell down and died in a moment. Next to fall was the young Shatrujit, his grandson and Sudarshan's step-brother.

Many of Yudhajit's soldiers and collaborators died in the hands of King Subahu and prince Sudarshan. The rest fled. Soon all was quiet.

Subahu prostrated himself to the Goddess on the lion. "Mother! if you came to my rescue so compassionately, be pleased to dwell forever in the city of Kashi. I am told that Kashi will remain as long as the earth remains. My prayer is, you be in Kashi as long as Kashi is there!"

The Goddess gave Her consent to this.

Sudarshan and his bride too prostrated themselves to the Goddess. "Mother! I'd have been nowhere but for your Grace. Kindly tell me what I should do now."

"Go to Ayodhya and ascend the throne. Rule the kingdom with truth and justice. My protection will be with you," said the Goddess.

Princes who were returning from Kashi got a chance to behold the Goddess. They were overwhelmed. After the wondrous vision disappeared, they



told Sudarshan, "It is on account of you that we had had this luck. Hence we will ever remain grateful to you."

Sudarshan and Shashikala took leave of King Subahu and proceeded to Ayodhya. Some of the friendly princes went as their escorts.

The news of Shatrujit's death and Sudarshan's victorious march had already reached Ayodhya. The ministers and the nobility organised a grand reception for the prince and his bride.

Thousands of men and women gathered at the entrance into the city to welcome the couple. There was sweet music.

The crowd burst into loud cheers when Sudarshan's chariot was sighted.

Sudarshan greeted them and then went to meet his step-mother. He bowed to her and said, "Mother, I am sorry for the death of your son, Shatrujit, and your father. They brought about their death themselves. I had never meant any harm to them."

After a pause, he said, again, "I lost my father when I was an infant. My mother and I had to flee on account of your father's wrath. He even killed my noble grandfather, King Virsen. On our way to find some shelter we were robbed by bandits. But I have learnt to look upon all these misfortunes as the play of destiny. I nurse no ill-will for anyone—least of all for you. My attitude to

you will be like my attitude to my own mother."

Tears welling out of her eyes, Queen Leelavati said, "My son, my father harassed you and killed your grandfather despite my prevailing upon him not to do such things. He has been paid for his wicked actions. I lost my son on account of his arrogance. You are my only hope and solace. I used to look upon your mother as my own elder sister. I shall continue doing the same."

Amidst great festivities Sudarshan was declared the king. The first thing he did thereafter was to erect a golden throne and to install the image of the Divine Mother in it. A day did not pass without his offering his sincere prayers to the Goddess. He ruled his kingdom with truth and justice.

(To Continue)



The Janmashtami

Where is Indian culture without Krishna? Where is Indian spirituality without the Gita, given by Krishna?

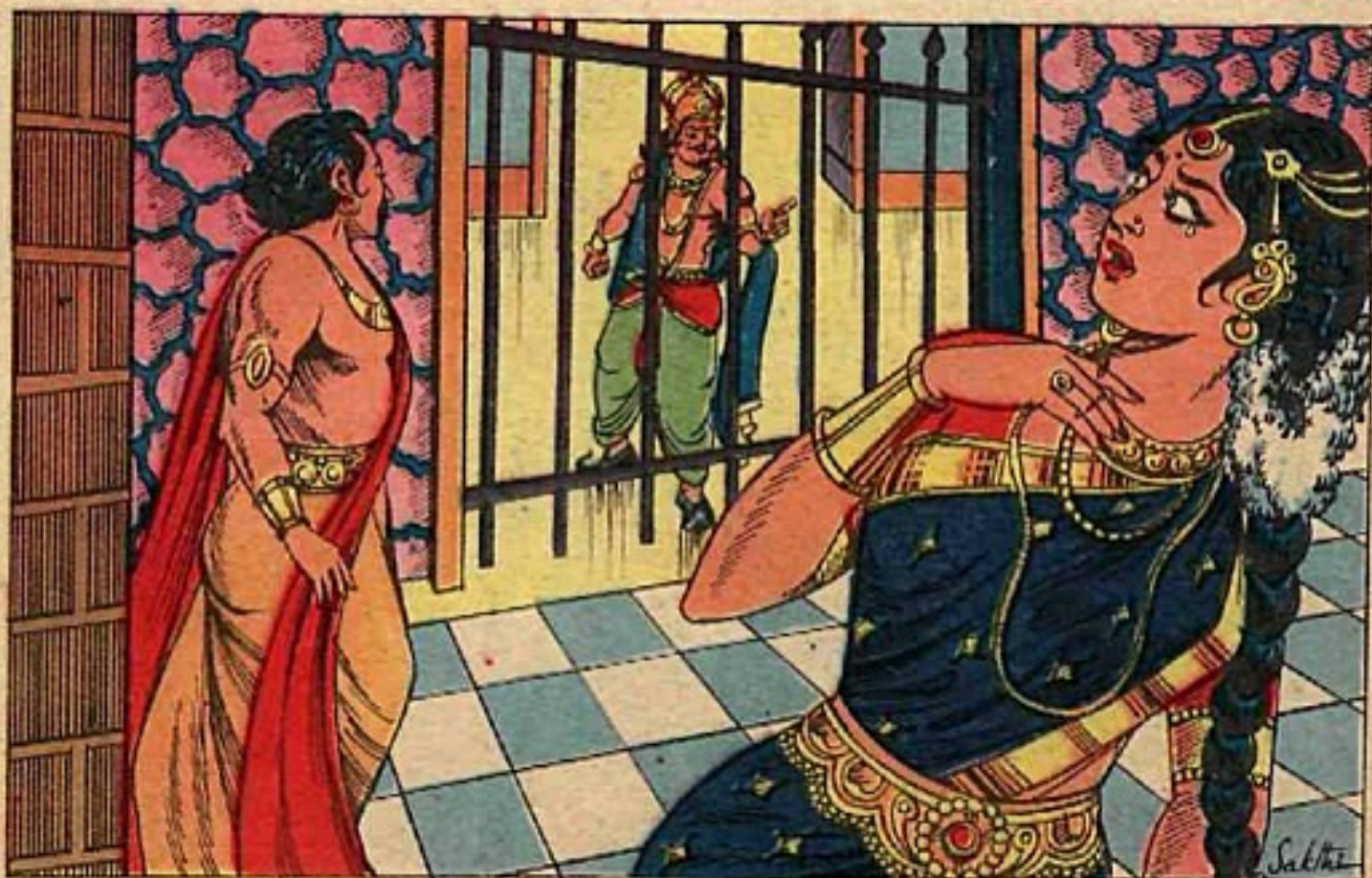
No wonder that the Birthday of Krishna—the *Janmashtami*—should be observed all over India with great enthusiasm. Temples apart, Krishna's image is worshipped in tens of thousands of homes. Episodes from his life are presented through plays.

Krishna, the eighth incarna-

tion of Vishnu, was born on the eighth night of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadra. Generally it falls around the middle, or in the later part, of August.

Kamsha, the king of Mathura was a tyrant. He had usurped the throne from his father, Ugrasen. It was prophesied that he shall be killed by the eighth child of his sister, Devaki.

Kamsha imprisoned Devaki and her husband, Vasudeva. As



soon as she would give birth to a child, the cruel Kamsha would kill it.

But such was the supernatural force at work that all the people of Mathura, including the prison guards, fell into a deep sleep when Krishna was born. It was a rainy night. Vasudeva, following a divine command, carried the child to the house of Nanda. He crossed the river Yamuna with the great serpent, Seshanaga, raising its hood and protecting him and the child from the rain.

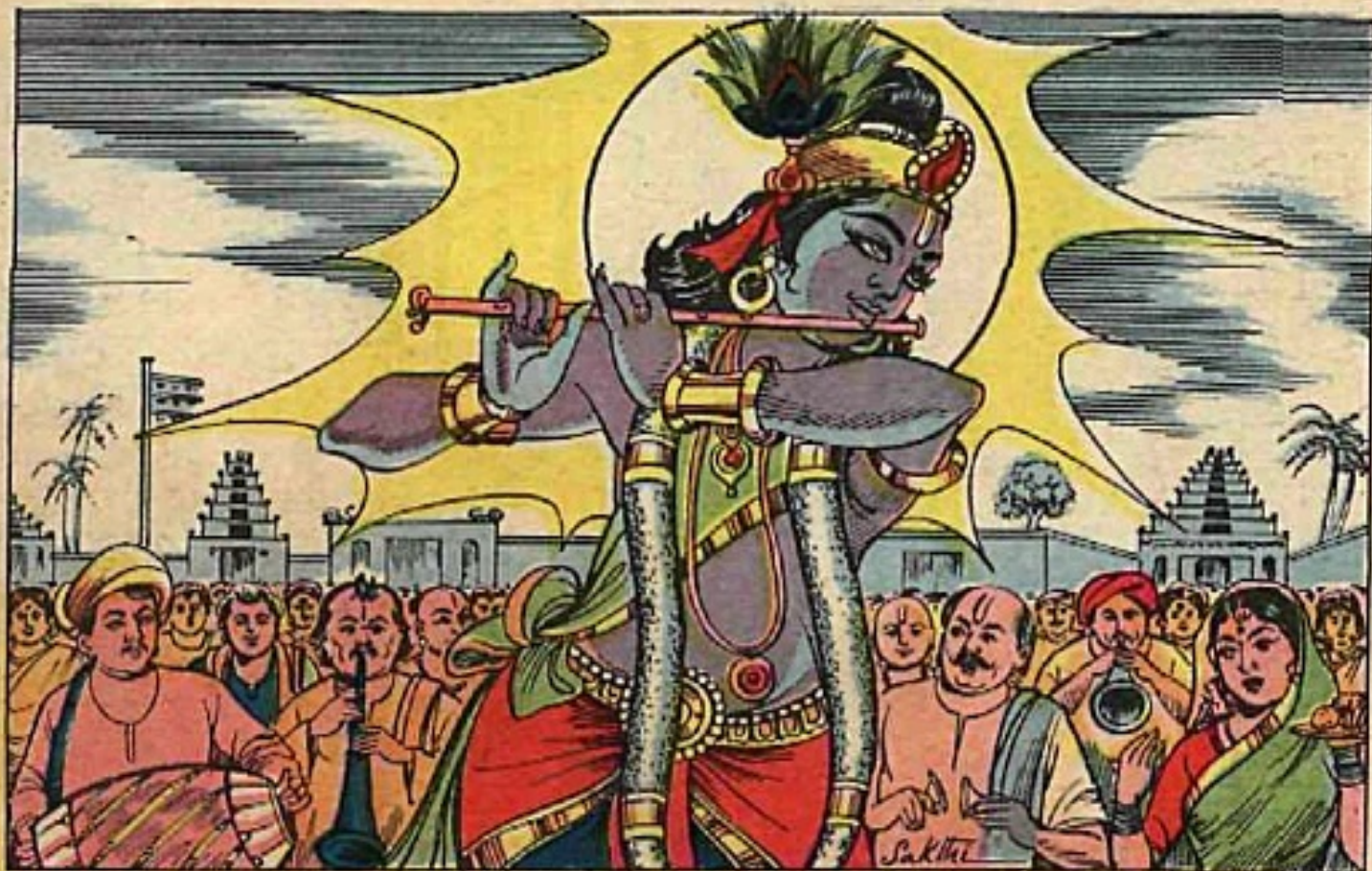
The wife of Nanda, Yasoda, had given birth to a female child. Vasudeva left Krishna with

Yasoda and returned to his prison with her child.

When Kamsha heard of Devaki's eighth child, he marched to her cabin, snatched the child, and tried to kill it by dashing it against a stone.

But the child slipped off his hand and disappeared. She was an incarnation of Mahamaya. Krishna began to grow in the safety of Nanda's house.

The *Janmashtami* is celebrated with love and devotion at Mathura and Brindavan in particular. The temples are decorated and thousands of devotees sing the glory of Krishna.





The Prophecy

Close to the village stood a hill. On one of its rocks was engraved a face. Nobody knew who did it and when. But it was a remarkable face—marked by wisdom and compassion. It was not easy to take one's eyes away from it.

For years the image had suffered strong wind and rain. But its charm had not diminished—thanks to the quality of the rock. It looked fresh after every shower. And it looked bright when bathed in the sunlight. Passers-by stopped and gazed at it again and again.

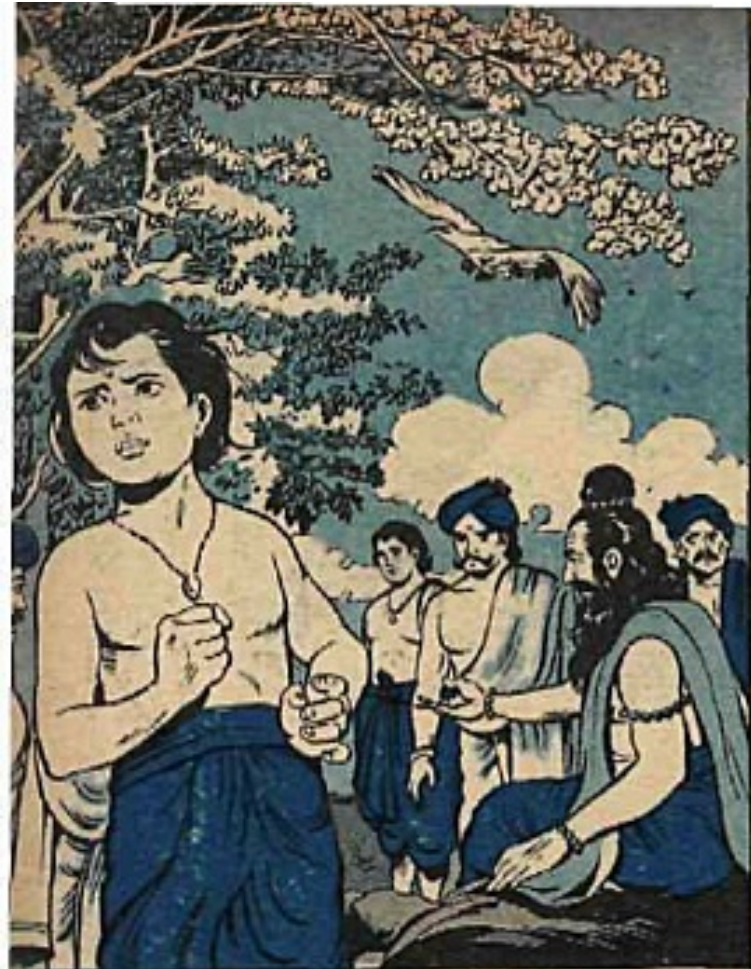
The people of the nearby village were poor, but not an unhappy lot. They worked hard and earned their livelihood.

At leisure they often remembered an old legend.

According to the legend a hermit who happened to pass by the rock had prophesied that one day a man will emerge in that very village who would resemble the image. Villagers will deem themselves lucky to have him—who will be noble, wise, and kind—amidst them.

Some people thought that the legend was nothing more than an idle tale. Some others, however, thought that there was truth in it.

Subroto, a small boy of the village, believed that the prophecy was sure to prove true. He looked forward to a day when a great man whose face



would resemble the face on the rock would appear in his village. A day did not pass without his going to have a glimpse of the image. Whenever the conduct or the speech of a villager was to his liking, he compared his face with the image. But he found no much similarity between them.

Once, a man who wore ochre-coloured clothes and had a beard like a hermit's camped in the village. Had the great man of the legend appeared? Subroto wondered. He ran to the stranger's camp—and found the villagers showing much reverence to him. They looked upon him

as a sage.

The sage quoted passages from scriptures with ease and spoke fluently. But Subroto, in a few days, felt quite disappointed with the man. He not only did not resemble the image, but also was far from being noble or kind. He got angry with the people for small reasons and hurled indecent words at them. A little boy who was suspected to have stolen a fruit from his camp was beaten up by him.

After a fortnight the sage left the village, but another stranger arrived. He was the retired general of the king's army. He had been ailing for some time. There was a spring in the hills near the village. Its water was known to be beneficent to the sick. That had brought the general there.

The villagers felt proud to have such an illustrious man amidst them. Whoever had thought that the famous general would choose an unknown village for his residence!

Subroto too felt quite excited—though for a different reason. "Here at last comes the great man of the legend!" he thought.

But not even a week had passed when the villagers

stopped feeling proud on account of the general. He was arrogant and rude. One morning he whipped a carter because of the dust raised by his bullock cart. He never talked to the villagers. He frowned on those who smiled at him or greeted him.

After a month the general suddenly left for the town, cursing the village and the spring. It was because there had been no improvement in his health.

A year passed. The village saw the arrival of yet another distinguished man. He was a merchant. His grandfather belonged to that village, but had shifted to the town. They were very rich.

"I am happy to return to the home of my ancestors," the merchant told the villagers with a broad smile.

"We are no less happy, sir," said the villagers. "We are at your service," they added.

Subroto observed the newcomer intently. "This could be the man of the legend," he thought. It was because the merchant appeared kind and noble to him.

The villagers had been really happy with the merchant coming to live in their village. Soon it



was clear that the merchant did not propose to live there always. He built a house there and employed servants to look after it, but himself shuttled between the town and the village. After all, he ran his business in the town.

Soon the villagers grew suspicious of the merchant's motive. He began to buy in bulk the various agricultural products of the area and sent them to the town. Soon the same stuff returned to the shops and the market of that area—to be sold at a much higher price!

The merchant lent money to the villagers at a high interest



and was ruthless in realising the loans. What was worse, he founded a distillery to produce liquor. For the first time in the history of the area some people were found drunk!

Subroto lost all hope in the merchant. He felt extremely sad when he saw the naive villagers taking to drinking. He pleaded with those of the village who worked in the distillery to resign their posts. His effort showed happy result. The village elders supported him. The merchant did not get hands to work for the distillery. It was closed down.

Soon a poet paid a visit to

the village. Like the general he had come for reason of health. He could keep an audience charmed by sweetly reciting his own verses.

Subroto grew hopeful once more. Perhaps the prophecy was going to prove true at last!

But a shock awaited him. It was the merchant's sixtieth birthday. Some flatterers of his organised a public meeting on the occasion. The poet recited in the meeting a long poem composed in praise of the merchant. He compared him to Harishchandra for his philanthropy, to King Janaka for his wisdom, and to Vikramaditya for his valour!

Villagers looked at one another meaningfully. "What a liar!" some of them whispered to the others.

Subroto felt sad again. He had no sleep at night. Early in the morning he went to the rock and murmured, "Must the legend ever remain only a legend? Must the prophecy remain unfulfilled?"

Some villagers who were passing by noticed Subroto. Exclaimed one of them, "Look, how our Subroto looks exactly like the image!"

Others looked. They agreed



that it was so. The boy looked charming as well as majestic—his face radiant with the light of the rising sun.

In years to come Subroto proved worthy of the resemblance. For his wisdom, nobi-

lity, and kindness, he endeared himself to all in the village. The villagers were proud of him. He grew up to become a true sage.

(Adapted from a story by Nathaniel Hawthorne)

SPOT THE TEN DIFFERENCES



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Mr. Brahm Dev



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Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? If yes, you may write it on a post card and mail to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, to reach us by 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs .25/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

The Prize for the June '81 goes to:
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The Winning Entry: 'Fiddler on a Stride' - 'Toddler on a Ride'

PICKS FROM THE WISE

He who comes up to his own idea of greatness must always have had a very low standard of it in his mind.

Silence is one great art of conversation.

— William Hazlitt

We learn from history that we do not learn from history.

— Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

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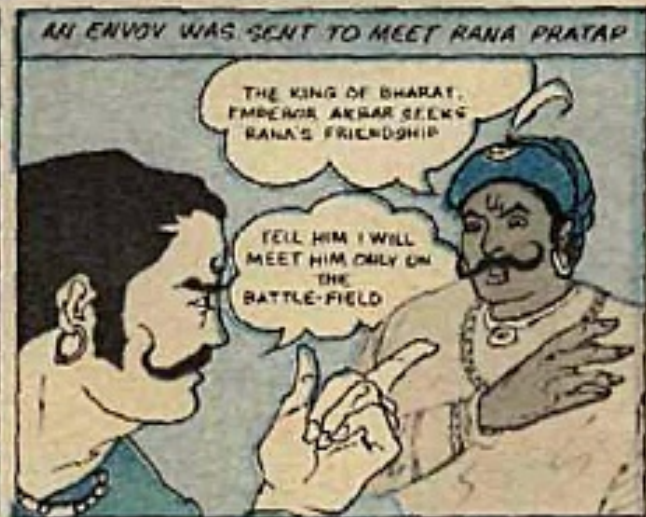


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